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Department of State

INCOMING TELEGRAM 1283

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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 IHR-10 NSAE-00
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P 271527Z NOV 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO USINFO WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3289
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

UNCLAS PORT OF SPAIN 03400

FOR PGM/RC, AR

E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION

1. GUYANA REPORTS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE STRONG, PROMINENT PLAY FROM LOCAL MEDIA, WITH ATTENTION REINFORCED BY NEW CASUALTY TOTALS. MOST STORIES BASED ON MASS OF DETAILS FROM "EYEWITHESS REPORTS," "INFORMED SOURCES," ETC. LOCAL TELEVISION OFFERED EXTENSIVE ON-SPOT FILM COVERAGE, LARGELY DUE STATION'S WINDFALL ACCESS TO NBC, CBS, ABC MATERIALS FROM U.S. NETWORKS WHO USING TRINIDAD FACILITIES FOR SATELLITE TRANSMISSION TO STATESIDE HEADQUARTERS.

2. NEWEST, WEEKEND ANGLE TO REPORTING IS STRONG ALLUSION TO OFFICIAL U.S. AND GUYANA RESPONSIBILITY FOR "BLUNDERS" IN HANDLING COMMUNE ISSUE. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26 TRINIDAD EXPRESS CARRIED LENGTHY FRONTPAGE ARTICLE BY PAPER'S CORRESPONDENT, JUST RETURNED FROM TRIP TO GUYANA, UNDER BANNER HED "THE BURNHAM BUNGLE." STORY LED WITH CHARGE THAT "IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT BOTH THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HOST COUNTRY BLUNDERED TRAGICALLY IN HANDLING THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE ISSUE".

3. EXPRESS ARTICLE SAID, "IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAD HAD ENOUGH EVIDENCE FROM PERSONS IN POSITIONS TO KNOW WHAT THE WHOLE JIM JONES MOVEMENT WAS ABOUT, TO HAVE TAKEN MUCH MORE POSITIVE ACTION THAN THEY DID." STORY CONTINUED THAT "LOOKING AT SOME OF THAT EVIDENCE, IT IS HARD TO ESCAPE THE CONCLUSION THAT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAD SOME KIND OF AGREEMENT TO ALLOW THE JIM JONES LUNATIC SECT TO RUN A SEPARATE STATE WITHIN GUYANA'S NATIONAL BOUNDARIES WITHOUT BEING SUBJECT TO THE LAWS OF GUYANA."

4. LISTING "SOME OF THE FACTS THAT WERE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE TWO GOVERNMENTS," STORY QUOTED FROM "AN APPEALING LETTER" IN JUNE FROM AN "AMERICAN MOTHER" SAYING THAT "LIVES OF 1,100 AMERICANS MAY BE IN DANGER" AND URGING "IMMEDIATE ACTION TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING THERE (JONESTOWN)." ARTICLE SAID "THERE WAS NO ANSWER TO THIS DESPERATE PLEA FROM THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF, BUT AMBASSADOR LAURENCE MANN OF THE GUYANESE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, THROUGH HIS CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY SAID THE AMBASSADOR 'WISHES TO ASSURE YOU THAT THESE STORIES ARE WILDLY INACCURATE.'"

5. STORY SAID SAME MOTHER HAD WRITTEN EARLIER DIRECTLY TO U.S. EMBASSY ASKING FOR HELP BUT HAD RECEIVED LETTER DATED MARCH 23 FROM U.S. VICE CONSUL NANCY MASON SAYING "WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE ORGANIZATION AND THE ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE. AS A RESULT OF THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE GROUP'S MOVE TO GUYANA, MR. MCCOY (THE AMERICAN CONSUL) HAS MADE SEVERAL TRIPS TO THE COMMUNITY, MAINLY AT THE REQUEST OF RELATIVES SEEKING INFORMATION ON THE WELFARE OF THE CHURCH'S MEMBERS. "DURING THESE VISITS HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO SUBSTANTIATE ANY OF THE ACCUSATIONS MADE AGAINST THE ORGANIZATION'S HIERARCHY. HIS MEETINGS WITH INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP HAVE BEEN AMICABLE AND HAS NOT NOTED SIGNS OF ANY DURESS ON THE MEMBERS."

6. AFTER QUOTING OTHER, SIMILAR EXAMPLES, ARTICLE CONCLUDED THAT "TODAY THE WORLD CONTINUES TO BE SHOCKED ALMOST DAILY AT THE EXTENT OF THE DEPRAVITY THAT WENT ON IN JONESTOWN, AND WHICH TWO GOVERNMENTS COULD HAVE PREVENTED HAD THEY BEEN PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE COMPLAINTS THEY RECEIVED CAREFULLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY." ASKEY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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